

DUNCAN HUNTER
520 DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY PROCUREMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY READINESS



U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

2205 RANDOLPH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0852
(202) 225-5672
FAX: (202) 225-0235
306 SOUTH PIERCE STREET
EL CAJON, CA 92020
(619) 579-3001
1101 AIRPORT ROAD, SUITE G
IMPERIAL, CA 92251
(760) 362-6428

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 1998

CONTACT: Maureen Cragin
Ryan Vaart
(202) 225-2539

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DUNCAN HUNTER,
CHAIRMAN, MILITARY PROCUREMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON THE FISCAL YEAR 1999 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S DEFENSE RELATED PROGRAMS**

March 19, 1998

The Subcommittee will come to order. The Subcommittee meets today to consider the Department of Energy's authorization request for Defense Related Activities. The Department of Energy's total FY 1999 budget request, including non-defense and defense related activities, is \$18.0 billion. The FY 1999 defense activities request, which is authorized in the annual Defense Authorization bill and overseen by this Subcommittee, is \$12.1 billion, an increase of \$672 million from the FY 1998 appropriations.

While the general public may think of the Department of Energy only in terms of petroleum exploration technologies and alternative energy sources, this subcommittee has a much different perspective. We recognize the Department as responsible for a critical element of our national security. It is no trivial or simple mission to maintain the safety, security, and reliability of the Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile. In simple terms, it is the National Security Committee which has oversight and authorization responsibility for roughly two thirds of the Department of Energy's annual budget. I think I speak for members on both sides of the aisle when I say that we do not take this responsibility lightly.

It is no secret that I have disagreed in the past and continue to disagree with the Administration's decision to embrace the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. However, I recognize that the Department right now has no choice but to pursue a science-based stockpile stewardship and management program. When I talk privately to many of the experts, they tell me that the science in this program is really top-notch, but they also confide in me that the only certain way to assure the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons is to test them.

In 2004—six years from now—if all goes according to schedule, our experts will finally have the complete set of tools they say they need to fully model the effects of aging on our nuclear weapons stockpile. By that time, however, half of our entire stockpile will be beyond its design life, and we won't have tested a nuclear weapon for 12 years. This strikes me as a very high risk approach to an absolutely critical facet of our national security.

I hope our witnesses are prepared to discuss science-based stockpile stewardship in some depth, as well as a number of other issues, including tritium production, the accelerated strategic computing initiative, construction management difficulties, the infrastructure needs of the production plants, and the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons.

We also want to discuss the Department's initiative to "privatize" environmental remediation projects. This subcommittee needs to know, for example, whether the Department is changing its characterization of this program. Privatization was advertised last year as a way to shift the risk of environmental projects from the government to the contractor. This was to be accomplished by using fixed-price contracts with payments occurring only after the cleanup facilities were constructed, and waste treatment was underway. If the Department is considering dropping some of these privatization elements, we need to consider whether there will be adequate incentives for contractor success.